

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETINGS AND PUBLIC HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Application of Otter Tail Power Company and Others for Certification of Transmission Facilities in Western Minnesota; OAH 12-2500-17037-2; MPUC Docket No. CN-05-619, and

In the Matter of the Application to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission for a Route Permit for the Big Stone Transmission Project in Western Minnesota; OAH 12-2500-17038-2; MPUC Docket No. TR-05-1275

Topics of this notice

This notice provides the dates, starting times and locations for the public information meetings and public hearings for two matters over which the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) has jurisdiction. These two matters include: 1) The application by Otter Tail Power and six additional companies (Applicants), for a Certificate of Need for a High Voltage Transmission Line (HVTL) known as the Big Stone Transmission Project and 2) an application for an HVTL Route Permit for the project.

The overall purpose of the proceeding for the Certificate of Need (CN) is to determine whether the proposed transmission line is needed and in the public interest. The purpose of the Route Permit is to assess and determine the location of the HVTL, considering the impact that the proposed project will have on people and the environment.

This notice also provides a description of the issues to be considered at the public hearings and the procedural requirements of the Office of Administrative Hearings for public hearings on large energy facilities.

If you have an interest in this project, please read this notice and contact the appropriate person identified in this notice if you have any questions.

General Information Regarding The Project

The Applicants are proposing to construct two new high voltage transmission lines in Western Minnesota. The new transmission lines will serve two purposes: 1) provide an outlet for power to be generated at a proposed new 600 megawatt unit to be constructed at the Big Stone Power Plant in South Dakota, and 2) increase the transmission capacity and improve reliability of the electric transmission system in the Buffalo Ridge area in Minnesota and South Dakota.

One new transmission line would run from the Big Stone Substation to the Morris Substation near Morris, Minnesota, a total of approximately 48 miles, about 43 miles of which are in Minnesota. The other transmission line would run from Big Stone Substation to the Granite Falls Substation in Granite Falls, Minnesota, a distance of approximately 90 miles, 54 miles of which would be in Minnesota. The Morris line would be constructed at 230 kilovolts (kV). The Granite Falls line would be constructed at 345 kV but operated initially at 230 kV. In addition, modification of several substations and existing transmission facilities will also be required as part of the Project. Also, in its Certificate of Need Application the Applicants identified an alternative to the Morris line – a 230 kV line to the Willmar Substation at Willmar, Minnesota. This line would be approximately 80 miles long.

The Applicants have identified both a preferred route for each transmission line and at least one alternative route. Two different border crossings have been identified for the Granite Falls line.

Authority And Statement Of Issues To Be Decided

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission is authorized by Minn. Statute 216B.243, subd. 2, to issue a Certificate of Need for a large energy facility if the applicant can prove there is a need for the project. A Certificate of Need is a state permit issued upon a determination that construction of an energy facility is in the public interest.

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission is authorized by Minn. Statute 116C.57, subd. 2, to designate routes and issue routing permits for designated routes. When the PUC designates a route, it issues a permit for the construction of a high voltage transmission line specifying the design, routing, right-of-way preparation, and facility construction it deems necessary, along with any other appropriate conditions.

The PUC is required by Minn. Statutes 116C.57, subd. 2d, and 216B.243, subd. 4, to hold public hearings and by Minn. Rule 4400.1700, subp 8, to hold public information meetings on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

Public Information Meetings

Prior to the formal hearings, the Minnesota Department of Commerce (DOC) will conduct informal public information meetings at the times and locations listed below. The purpose of the meetings is to provide background information on the proposed Big Stone Transmission Project, the Certificate of Need process, the Route Permit process and the hearing process. At the information meetings, DOC representatives will explain how the public may participate in each of the processes and answer questions.

DOC will also receive comments and answer questions about the DEIS at the public information meetings. Comments on the DEIS can be submitted to DOC until October 31, 2006. Substantive comments received by that date will be addressed and incorporated into a final EIS that will be completed and available on December 1, 2006. At the conclusion of each Public Information Meeting, which is expected to last approximately 30 minutes, the public hearing will begin.

Public Hearing

An Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) from the Minnesota Office of Administrative Hearings will hold public hearings for the PUC to establish a complete and accurate record regarding the two Big Stone Transmission Project proceedings (Certificate of Need and Route Permit) that require PUC approval. Any person who would like to comment on the Certificate of Need or the routes proposed by the Applicants can do so at any of the scheduled public hearings or in writing to the ALJ (see below).

Administrative Law Judge

Steve M. Mihalchick and Barbara L. Neilson will preside at the hearings. Judge Mihalchick's and Judge Neilson's address is Office of Administrative Hearings, 100 Washington Square, Suite 1700, Minneapolis, MN 55401-2138, Fax: 612-349-2665. Judge Mihalchick can be reached at 612-349-2544 or steve.mihalchick@state.mn.us. Judge Neilson can be reached at 612-341-7604 or barbara.neilson@state.mn.us.

Information Meeting and Public Hearing Schedule

City	Information Meeting and Public Hearing	Date and Time*
Benson	DS Lageson's Country Inn & Suites 300 14 th St. S.	October 9, 2006 1 p.m. & 6 p.m.
Morris	UM, Science Auditorium, Room 2950 Science Bldg. 600 E 4 St.	October 10, 2006 1 p.m. & 6 p.m.
Ortonville	Matador Supper Club 778 US Hwy. 75	October 11, 2006 1 p.m. & 6 p.m.
Canby	Canby Community Center, City Hall 110 Oscar Avenue North	October 12, 2006 1 p.m. & 6 p.m.
Granite Falls	Kilowatt Center Room 107 600 Kilowatt Dr.	October 13, 2006 1 p.m. & 6 p.m.
St. Paul	MPUC Large Hearing Room 121 7 th Place E, Ste 300	October 16, 2006 1 p.m. & 6 p.m.
	Evidentiary Hearing	
St. Paul	MPUC Hearing Rooms 121 7 th Place E, Ste 300	December 5-15, 2006, 9 a.m.

*NOTE: Each hearing session will continue until all persons have had the opportunity to present evidence and question witnesses. If needed, the hearing may be recessed and continued by the ALJ, and additional hearing dates may be established by the ALJ in accordance with Minnesota Rules 1405.1400 to 1405.2300.

Conduct Of Hearing

The ALJ will conduct the public hearings in accordance with the Office of Administrative Hearings process (Minnesota Rules Chapter 1400) and in accordance with PUC's energy facility permitting process (Minnesota Rules Chapter 1405). Copies of the rules are available to review online at <http://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/arule/1400.html> and will be available at the public meetings and hearings. Copies may also be obtained from the Department of Commerce as described below.

At the start of each hearing session, the ALJ will explain the procedural rules for the hearing, including the following: a) all persons may present evidence and argument with respect to issues and may question witnesses; b) all persons may be represented by legal counsel, but such representation is not required; and c) the rules of evidence.

Questioning of witnesses is allowed, and will be conducted in a sequence determined by the ALJ.

A person will be allowed to participate without the necessity of intervening as a party. Participation includes: a) offering direct testimony with or without benefit of oath or affirmation and without the necessity of prefilng testimony; b) offering direct testimony or other material in written form at or following the hearing; and c) questioning witnesses. Any person who wishes to question a witness but does not want to ask the questions may submit questions in writing to the ALJ, who will then ask the questions of the witness. Questions may be submitted during the hearing or may be sent to the ALJ in advance of the hearing.

For more information about participation as a member of the public, contact the PUC's or DOC's Public Advisor (see below).

Parties

As of September 7, 2006, the following are the official parties to one or both of the proceedings and their attorneys:

The Applicants (Otter Tail Power Company, Central Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (MPA), Great River Energy, Heartland Consumers Power District, Montana- Dakota Utilities Co., Southern Minnesota MPA, and Western Minnesota MPA, as represented by Missouri River Energy Services). Todd Guerrero, Lindquist & Vennum, PLLP, 4200 IDS Center, 80 South 8th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55402-2274.

Joint Intervenors (Izaak Walton League of America-Midwest Office, Fresh Energy, Union of Concerned Scientists, Wind on the Wires, and Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy). Elizabeth Goodpaster, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, 26 East Exchange Street, Suite 206, Saint Paul, MN 55101-1667.

Minnesota Department of Commerce. Julia Anderson (for Certificate of Need only), Minnesota Attorney General's Office, 1400 Bremer Tower, 445 Minnesota Street, St. Paul, MN 55101-2127.

South Dakota Governor's Office of Economic Development. John Drawz, Fredrikson & Byron, PA, 200 South Sixth Street, Suite 4000, Minneapolis, MN 55402-1425.

FPL Energy, LLC. John DiDonato, FPL Energy, LLC, Mail Stop FEW/JB, 700 Universe Blvd., Juno Beach, FL 33408.

Excelsior Energy, Inc. Thomas Osteraas, Excelsior Energy, Inc., 11100 Wayzata Blvd., Suite 305, Minnetonka, MN 55305.

Ron Gustafson and Linda Castagneri. Carol Overland (issues related to the Mesaba Project that are raised by Excelsior Energy only), Overland Law Office, 402 Washington Street S., Northfield, MN 55057-2467

Midwest ISO. Christopher K. Sandburg, Lockridge Grindal Nauen PLLP, 100 Washington Ave S, Suite 2200, Minneapolis, MN 55401.

Availability Of Witnesses And Representatives

Representatives for the Applicants will be available to answer questions concerning the need for the transmission and the proposed route at each hearing. Several witnesses for the Applicants will only be available at the evidentiary hearing in St. Paul.

Most witnesses for the Intervenors will be available only at the evidentiary hearing.

Representatives from the Department of Commerce on the Certificate of Need will be available at each hearing. Witnesses for the Department will be available at the evidentiary hearing. Representatives from the Department of Commerce on the route permit will be available at each hearing and at the evidentiary hearing.

Public Comment Period Deadlines

Written comments from the public must be received by the Administrative Law Judge (see address above) by October 31, 2006.

Inquiries, Project Contacts

Public advisors from the DOC and PUC staff have been appointed to assist and advise persons interested in taking part in the proceedings and will provide on request documents identified in this notice. However, the public advisors are not authorized to give legal advice. For more information or to request an accommodation, contact one of the persons listed below.

Department of Commerce. The Commission has designated DOC staff member David Birkholz (Tel: 651-296-2878 or david.birkholz@state.mn.us) as project manager and Deborah Pile (Tel: 651-297-2375 or deborah.pile@state.mn.us) as the public advisor for the transmission route permit proceeding. You may contact them at: Department of Commerce, 85 7th Place East, Suite 500, Saint Paul, MN 55101-2198. Other contact information: Toll-Free: 1-800-657-3794, Fax: 651-297-7891 or TTY: Minnesota Relay Services, 1-800-627-3529, and ask for the DOC.

Public Utilities Commission. The Commission has designated Bret Eknes (Tel: 651-201-2236 or bret.eknes@state.mn.us) of the PUC staff as its public advisor for the CN proceeding. He may be contacted in writing at: Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, 121 7th Place E., Suite 350, Saint Paul, MN 55101-2147.

Project Mailing Lists

If you would like to have your name added to the PUC route permit proceeding mailing list for the Big Stone Transmission Project (PUC Docket E017/TR-05-1275), you may register at: <http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/Docket.html?Id=18215> or contact the DOC staff at the address above.

The PUC maintains a separate service list for the Certificate of Need proceeding. To be placed on that list (PUC Docket E017/CN-05-619) mail, fax, or email Robin Benson at Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, 121 7th Place E., Suite 350, Saint Paul, MN 55101-2147, Fax: 651-297-7073 or robin.benson@state.mn.us.

Project Information Available

Information regarding the PUC proceedings on the Big Stone Transmission Project is available on the following websites, including applications, project information and the Draft EIS. Information on the route permit proceeding is available at: <http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/Docket.html?Id=18215>. Information on the route and CN is also on eDockets at: <https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling/search.jsp>. Enter 05-1275 for information on the route proceedings or 05-619 for information on the certificate of need proceedings. Enter 05-1275 for information on the route proceedings or 05-619 for information on the certificate of need proceedings.

A copy of the Draft EIS is available at the following local libraries:

Benson Public Library
200 13th St. S.
Benson, MN 56215

Canby Public Library
110 Oscar Ave.
Canby, MN 56220

Chippewa County Public Library
224 South First Street
Montevideo, MN 56265

Granite Falls Public Library
155 7th Ave.
Granite Falls, MN 56241

Madison Public Library
401 6th Ave.
Madison, MN 56256

Morris Public Library
102 East 6th St.
Morris, MN 56267

Ortonville Public Library
412 2nd St. NW
Ortonville, MN 56278

Willmar Public Library
410 5th St. SW
Willmar, MN 56201